

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-14 ACDA-19 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01 /126 W

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R 180740Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1856

INFO /AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2821

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 5740

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AS

SUBJ: PROSPECTS FOR EARLY AUSTRALIAN GENERAL ELECTIONS

FADE

REF: CANBERRA 5652

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: PROSPECTS FOR GENERAL ELECTIONS IN 1973 HAVE FADED CONSIDERABLY SINCE SUBMISSION OF REFTEL. DLP BRANCHES OPPOSE FORCING ELECTION AT THIS TIME, LIBERALS HAVE REALIZED THAT ELECTIONS CAN ONLY TAKE PLACE WITH AGREEMENT OF LABOR GOVERNMENT, AND COUNTRY PARTY IS SO FAR ALONE IN PRESSING FOR ELECTIONS. ALP PRESIDENT HAWKE AND PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM ARE IN OPEN CONFLICT OVER INCOMES REFERENDUM. POSSIBLE THAT GENERAL ELECTIONS WILL TAKE PLACE NEXT YEAR, WITH STAGE SET BEFORE END OF 1973 BY SENATE ACTION TO APPROVE APPROPRIATIONS BILL COVERING ONLY A FEW MONTHS, RATHER THAN BALANCE OF FISCAL YEAR. DLP POSITION IS STILL AMBIGUOUS, HOWEVER, AND SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENT WITH LIBERAL AND COUNTRY PARTIES FOR SENATE ELECTION WOULD APPEAR TO BE ESSENTIAL CONDITION TO DLP COOPERATION. END SUMMARY.

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2. PROSPECTS FOR AUSTRALIAN GENERAL ELECTIONS BEFORE END OF 1973 HAVE FADED CONSIDERABLY SINCE SUBMISSION OF REFTEL, AS ALL POLITICAL PARTIES DIRECTLY CONCERNED HAVE THOUGHT THROUGH IMPLICATIONS OF BRINGING ON ELECTION BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

3. AS REPORTED IN REFTEL, KEY TO ELECTIONS BEFORE END OF 1973 IS ATTITUDE OF DEMOCRATIC LABOR PARTY (DLP), WHOSE FIVE SEATS IN SENATE HOLD BALANCE OF POWER. IN PRESS STATEMENT OCT 18 DLP LEADER SENATOR MCMANUS SAID, QTE DEMOCRATIC LABOR PARTY LAST WEEK ASKED ITS STATE BRANCHES THEIR VIEWS ON FORCING AN ELECTION THIS YEAR. THE BRANCHES RECOMMENDED THAT THE DLP NOT SUPPORT ACTION FOR AN ELECTION THIS YEAR. THE DLP SENATORS ARE NOT BOUND TO ACCEPT THIS RECOMMENDATION, BUT NATURALLY ARE INFLUENCED BY IT. NO PROPOSAL TO FORCE AN ELECTION HAS BEEN RECEIVED BY THE DLP FROM THE LIBERAL OR COUNTRY PARTIES. THE DLP BELIEVES THERE WILL NOT BE AN ELECTION THIS YEAR. IT EXPECTS THE SENATE ELECTION IN MAY, 1974. END QTE.

4. FOR ITS PART, LIBERAL PARTY LEADER SNEDDEN HAS MADE NO FINAL DECISION ON PRESSING FOR ELECTIONS, BUT LIBERAL PARTY SECRETARIAT SOURCES TELL US THAT LIBERALS HAVE REALIZED THAT IN LAST ANALYSIS ELECTIONS CANNOT TAKE PLACE UNLESS LABOR GOVERNMENT PERMITS THEM TO BE HELD. WHILE NOT ALL SAMPLES HAVE BEEN RECEIVED FROM EIGHT MARGINAL ELECTORATES POLLED BY LIBERALS LAST WEEK (REFTEL, RETURNS FROM ELECTORATE OF CASEY (MELBOURNE METROPOLITAN AREA) SHOW SWING OF CLOSE TO 10PERCENT TO LIBERALS. LABOR WON CASEY IN DEC, 1972, WITH SWING OF CLOSE TO 10PERCENT AND AS RESULT OF DYNAMIC CAMPAIGNING BY RACE MATTHEWS, FORMER PRIVATE SECRETARY TO PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM, AGAINST LACKLUSTER LIBERAL CANDIDATE AND FORMER MINISTER, PETER HOWSON. POLL SUGGESTS, AS DO OTHER INDICATORS, THAT LABOR HAS LOST GROUND IT GAINED IN 1972. HOWEVER, ISSUE REMAINS THAT LABOR GOVERNMENT IN FACT CANNOT BE PUSHED INTO ELECTIONS THIS YEAR WITHOUT ITS CONSENT.

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5. COUNTRY PARTY OCT 17 PUBLISHED FIRST ISSUE OF MONTHLY NEWSHEET ENTITLED QTE BALANCE END QTE WHICH EXPRESSES DETERMINATION OF PARTY LEADER ANTHONY TO PRESS ON WITH QTE FORGING THE ANTI-LABOR ALLIANCE. END QTE. PUBLICATION MAKES CLEAR THAT ONLY IN QUEENSLAND AND WESTERN AUSTRALIA IS THERE AMJORITY COUNTRY PARTY SENTIMENT IN FAVOR OF FORMAL MERGER WITH DLP. HOWEVER, ANTHONY IS PRESSING FOR SOME FORM OF ELECTORAL

ALLIANCE, DETAILS OF WHICH NOT YET CLEAR. IN STATE-
MENT IN NEW PUBLICATION, ANTHONY STATES THAT COUNTRY
PARTY QTE CAN RESPONSIBLY TAKE NO OTHER COURSE THAN
TO SEEK THE SUPPORT OF THE LIBERAL PARTY AND THE
DEMOCRATIC LABOR PARTY IN ACTION THAT WILL FORCE THE
GOVERNMENT TO GIVE THE NATION A CHANCE TO EXPRESS
SECOND THOUGHTS ON THE DECISION OF LAST DECEMBER 2.
END QTE.

6. FOR ITS PART, AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY HAS EN-
COUNTERED EMBARRASSING CONFLICT DURING THIS WEEK.
ON OCT 15 ACTU FEDERAL EXECUTIVE DECIDED TO CAMPAIGN
AGAINST FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S INCOMES REFERENDUM DEC 8,
WHILE SUPPORTING PRICES REFERENDUM. IN STATEMENT TO
PRESS OCT 15 ACTU AND ALP PRESIDENT, R.J. HAWKE,
SAID HE EXPECTED SENIOR TRADE UNION OFFICIALS WHO WERE
ALSO MEMBERS OF ALP TO FOLLOW THE ACTU EXECUTIVE'S
DECISION TO OPPOSE INCOMES REFERENDUM. HAWKE SAID HE
THOUGHT THERE WAS A POSSIBILITY THAT BOTH REFERENDUM
PROPOSALS WOULD BE DEFEATED. IN HIS PRESS CONFERENCE
OCT 16 PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM URGED ACTU AND ALP MEMBERS
TO DISREGARD ACTION BY ACTU IN CALLING FOR OPPOSITION
TO INCOMES REFERENDUM.

7. COMMENT: WHILE DECEMBER GENERAL ELECTIONS NOW
SEEM TO BE UNLIKELY, NUMBER OF INDICATORS POINT TO
ELECTIONS NEXT YEAR, PERHAPS WITH STAGE SET BY ACTION
BY SENATE IN NOVEMBER TO LIMIT APPROPRIATIONS BILL AS
TO TIME AND THUS TO FORCE ELECTIONS IN FIRST HALF OF
1974. DLP POSITION IS STILL VERY AMBIGUOUS, HOWEVER,
AND SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENT WITH LIBERAL AND COUNTRY
PARTIES ON SENATE SLATES WOULD STILL APPEAR TO BE
ESSENTIAL CONDITION TO DLP COOPERATION IN FORCING
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ELECTIONS.
GREEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, ELECTIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 OCT 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: worrelsw
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973CANBER05740
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS GREEN
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: CANBERRA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731025/aaaaasci.tel
Line Count: 156
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: CANBERRA 5652
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: worrelsw
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 OCT 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16-Oct-2001 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <05 MAR 2002 by worrelsw>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PROSPECTS FOR EARLY AUSTRALIAN GENERAL ELECTIONS FADE
TAGS: PINT, AS
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005